Interview with Terrence Catherman

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Information Series

TERRENCE CATHERMAN

Interviewed by: G. Lewis Schmidt

Initial interview date: January 25, 1991

Education, Army Service, Initial Entry Into Department of State: 1949

Q: This is Lew Schmidt interviewing Terry Catherman in his office in VOA on Friday, the 25th of January, 1991. Terry I am going to ask you to give a brief biosketch of yourself to indicate the education you had, what it was you did, if any thing, before you came into government work in the Information Agency. If you did not have prior work experience, we will go on directly with your entry into the Agency and your career in USIA taking it in the sequence of your assignments. Will you start now and give us a complete background on yourself, please.

CATHERMAN: I was born in Michigan and I went to the University of Michigan in the early "40s prior to entering the army. Then I completed my bachelors and I got a masters in political science at the University of Michigan after the army. In 1949 I competed along with a lot of other people for the position of State Department Intern. I did want to get into the Foreign Service, that much I knew. I had picked up a love for foreign affairs while I was in the army and I had specialized in Soviet Affairs in my university studies after the war. Primarily because I observed the trouble we were having with the Soviets in Korea while

I was in the occupation of Japan. It seemed to me that the Soviet-American relationship would be paramount in my experience. I was only 20, 21, at that time but I did make that decision and followed through when I went to Michigan, learning Russian. I became a teaching fellow in the Russian language for the last year and a half I was in Ann Arbor teaching both at University of Michigan and at Wayne State University in Detroit. So I considered myself a Soviet expert and actually applied at the CIA for a job and got an offer. However, at the same time, I got an offer to become a State Department Intern, and I decided that I preferred overt diplomacy to the covert side. I took the State Department Internship and went to Washington in 1950. So I really had no professional experience in between my university education and entering the State Department. At that time, of course, there was no USIA, this was 1950.

1950: Shift From Department of State Internship To Kreis Resident Officer Program In HICOG

I came to Washington and spent about 7 weeks as an intern and heard about the Kreis Resident Officer program in Germany. Germany was still occupied at that time, although the occupation was coming to an end. The Federal Republic of Germany had been founded the fall of 1949. We were still doing some work with the Germans as far as the construction of their society was concerned and the Kreis Resident officers were the representatives of the State Department at the county level in Germany. I heard about that program and it appealed to me very much. I was interviewed and accepted and went from the Intern Program right into a Kreis Resident Officer training program which took me to Germany in the winter of 1950-1951.

The Kreis Resident Officers, there were 165, maybe 157, were the brain child of John J. McCloy, who was the American High Commissioner for Germany, and Shep Stone, who was his director of public affairs. We essentially were engaged with Germans in helping them to construct a democratic society at the community level. We used our own experience, the experience of American experts who were brought over by the American

Military Government at first and then later on by the Embassy. It was a huge program and was one of the pivotal experiences of my life. I spent the first year and a half of that tour in Germany as a KRO, as we were called. I learned how to deal with a language that was not native to me. I learned German, which I think became quite good, and I learned how to handle a variety of aspects of democratic society which I had perhaps practiced in the United States but was not really so aware of. It was a great educational experience for me. And I think it was quite a profound experience for the Germans.

I jump now for a moment to the present. German academics specialists are now getting into the study of that era and I am encouraged to find that they are finding that our efforts were beneficial to the construction of German democracy.

Catherman's Philosophic Evaluation Of American Accomplishments In Germany In Early Post War Era

So I have a philosophy about that era. I spent four and a half years in Germany my first time, and my philosophy is the following. The Americans pursued a triad in their foreign policy in regards to Germany. For one thing, we had the Marshall Plan, of course, and that was the big money game. The success story was patent. We saw the Germans come through with their “Wirtschafts- wunder,” as they called it, their economical miracle.

So we had that and, of course, we had our security policies which very quickly involved the Germans. By 1952 the great debate about the form that the new German army would take and how it would be incorporated into NATO was going full blast. We did bring the Germans into NATO and they did once again form a very efficient military establishment.

So those were two legs of the triad. The third leg of the triad, essentially was democratization. It was a big effort. When the Americans were going full blown in Germany we had about 350 Americans and about 4,000 Germans devoted to this effort. In addition to the Kreis Resident Officers we also had 52 Amerika Ha#ser, so-called America Houses, which were full-blown American cultural and information centers, usually with one or

perhaps two Americans running each one, and a competent German staff. There was a library, a full-blown film program, cultural program, concerts by Americans and much, much information about how the Americans run their democratic society.

Shep Stone had told me just before he died that he had a budget which was roughly $50 million a year to run this program. So it was big and I take pride in having participated in that.

1952: Catherman Leaves Kreis Resident Officer Ranks To Become Amerika Haus Director In Heidelberg; Then To Bonn

After I left the KRO ranks I became America House director in Heidelberg, 1952-53 and then went on to Bonn to run, what we called a speakers and artists programming office which essentially made available to a variety of German institutions, and of course the American institutions which were big in West Germany at that time, prominent American speakers and performing artists who were interested in coming to Germany to show what America has to offer.

Post OMGUS Information Program Under HICOG Began As Department of State Controlled Operation, But Transferred To Newly Created US Information Agency In August, 1953

CATHERMAN: They were in the HICOG operation...

Q: Now at what point did the information program become individualized and distinct from the Kreis Officer program? Shep Stone, I think, headed up the information program or else he was a deputy, but he was one of the top officers in there I know.

CATHERMAN: Yes. He was the director of public affairs for John J. McCloy and this all started in 1949. The military government ceased to exist when the Federal Republic of Germany came into existence which was in October 1949. At that time the High

Commission for Germany which comprised the American High Commissioner, the French High Commissioner and the British High Commissioner took over as civilian representatives from the Military Government. General Lucius Clay had been the American Military Governor prior to that. He left at the time that John J. McCloy, a civilian, came in and took over the civilian component. Shep Stone was his public affairs officer. He was responsible for all these informational and cultural activities that I mentioned until...I think Shep Stone left that job in 1952, but the primary impetus of that work continued until roughly 1955.

Q: At that time it initially went in under the State Department. It was an information program run by the State Department until USIA became an entity in 1953.

CATHERMAN: In August of 1953 USIA was established and those of us who remained in the program became foreign service officers in the USIA. I have some theories about that, but I don't know if you want to go on to that...

Q: Yes, why don't you go into it, because I think it is all very pertinent background.

CATHERMAN: Right. USIA became the information and later on the cultural arm of American diplomacy abroad. I just happened to be in Washington in the summer of 1953 on home leave from Germany, I went back to Germany then and spent 2 more years there. So I was here when this whole play about the establishment of USIA developed. My impression, this is my personal impression, is that USIA was established essentially for negatives reasons. It was established because John Foster Dulles simply did not want to face Joe McCarthy and his committee and others in the Congress who were hearing, mostly from the Voice of America, denunciations of their colleagues, people with whom they had disagreements about philosophy or ideology. John Foster Dulles just decided to get rid of all of that to purify the State Department, to make the State Department a vehicle of the conduct of traditional diplomacy and move the information arm out of the State Department.

So USIA was established essentially under a cloud. There were people who had been accused of disloyalty to the United States. Most of them were in the Voice of America, but not all of them. I remember, for instance, that year Mr. Cohn and Mr. Schine who represented Senator McCarthy, came to Germany and grilled the Embassy's press attach#, who was a USIA member. They also grilled the director of RIAS, Radio In America Sector, in Berlin who is, of course part of USIA and several other USIA representatives including me, although they did not have any particular ideological reason to talk with me. I was director of America House in Heidelberg and they looked at the book collection there and were dissatisfied to find, among other things, that Howard Fast was on the shelf.

Well that was the atmosphere as I remember it when USIA was founded. I was not particularly happy with that era and with the sort of foundation upon which our Agency was built on in the beginning. I am glad to say it developed and created its own positive raison d'etre fairly soon and then, in the late ''70s, when John Reinhardt was Director, we also got the cultural side of American foreign diplomacy when the State Department cut loose those cultural activities which were assumed into USIA.

At any rate, those first four and a half years of my diplomatic life were full of this verve and excitement of watching a German society evolve into a democratic one and a strong one economically. I even observed the beginning of the establishment of the German military.

I was one of the first USIA foreign service officers to get an additional year of education at the Russian Institute at Columbia. I did this primarily as a preparation to going to the Soviet Union. That was in 1955.

Q: I want to ask two questions. One has to do with the work you were doing in Germany, really three questions. First of all, you said that you were in the States at the time the Executive Order of August 1 or 3, I'm not sure which one it was, created the Agency.

Were you given the opportunity to elect whether to remain with USIA or return to the State Department where you started?

CATHERMAN: We were transferred from the State Department automatically. I could have protested that transfer and sought another job in the State Department, but I chose not to essentially because I was involved in the work I was doing and I rather enjoyed it.

Q: The reason I ask the question is because I had been in the State Department a couple of years before I went into the foreign service with the information part. The change over occurred while I was in Japan. I was given the option of staying with USIA or going back to the State Department. I too elected to remain with the Agency because I felt that what I was doing was so much more exciting than what I would be doing otherwise. I guess because you had a shorter stay you would have had to make a specific...

CATHERMAN: Yes.

Q: Because you had a shorter time in State, I'd had two years or more, you probably just were taken over and would have had to ask specifically to return.

CATHERMAN: That is exactly right. We were simply assigned to USIA. I don't remember resisting that idea at all.

Catherman Qualifies His Evaluation Of American Success In Democratizing German Society

Q: The second question that I want to ask is: I gather from what you say that you felt the thrust of the program that you were in was being highly successful in converting the German thinking over to a democratic point of view and denying their Nazi background. You think it made tremendous progress at that time.

CATHERMAN: I don't think they made tremendous progress. I am not a radical thinker about our success there. I think we had a good success. The Germans who were engaged

in that process, for instance, the participants in the major exchanges program, we had very large exchange programs with the Germans then. In 1951, for instance, we had almost 1,200 young German leaders visit the United States for periods of up to six months. I think we can be satisfied that we did a good job with competent people. I think we can be satisfied with what happened to the German society. I can't quantify that any more. I don't think it was by any means a sensational success. We did okay. It was worth the expenditure of money and brain power that went into it. We have a stable democratic German society with which we must deal now. It is not going to be easy to deal with the Germans, but at least we have a democratic society, a society dedicated to essentially the same approach to running public affairs as we Americans have. That was certainly not guaranteed in the immediate post-war era.

Q: Did you, yourself, get into the educational institutions and the work with the universities in Germany as a result of your work in the America House?

CATHERMAN: Yes, I did. At that time my main contact was with the University of Heidelberg and we had an intensive relationship with the University of Heidelberg. We facilitated an academic exchanges program between the University of Heidelberg and several American universities. Helped them set up formal agreements with American universities, used their professors in our programs and supplied American academics for their university programs. I was very happy with that academic relationship. And I must say it was good preparation for the future because as I stayed on in the foreign service I became chairman of four Fulbright commissions—the Israeli-American Fulbright Commission, the Yugoslav-American, the French-American and finally the German-American Fulbright Commission. So it was good training at the beginning. The relationship was very active and very positive.

German Universities Resisted American Style Educational Democratization

Q: I don't know whether you dealt with universities other than at Heidelberg but did you feel any sense of underlying reluctance or opposition to what we were trying to do in their universities or did they accept it fairly well?

CATHERMAN: They did not accept it, they never accepted it. I think what we can attribute to our efforts at that time, the success side in Germany is the opening up the universities. The universities ceased to become the elitist, authoritarian institutions that they had been before. They became more democratic, frankly more than I would have liked to see them, but then I am not a German. By the time I came back in the "70s to Germany and this last period which ran over five years from 1985 -1990, I saw what I thought was a pretty anarchistic situation in the German universities. They were overwhelmed with students. They could not turn any students away and their concepts of democracy essentially wiped away most discipline. In that respect the open universities, as the Germans developed from the American idea went probably farther than I would have liked. But at any rate, as far as university reform in the American sense of the word, I would not say we were very successful. We encountered a lot of resistance and I would certainly not list one of my successes as in reforms at the University of Heidelberg. What we did do was supply an exchange of academic professors and students and that is as far as my success extended.

Q: What was your experience with the professors from Heidelberg University when they returned? Did they fall pretty much back into the old German pattern or did it have some influence on them?

CATHERMAN: Well, they were very frustrated when they returned. I think this can be said of a lot of Germans, not only academics. They came to the United States which was an enormously widening experience for them whether they were academics or leaders in other aspects of American society and came back to see this sort of cramped authoritarian tradition. Although it was breaking up it was still there. The German society is a completely different thing than the experience we have had here in the United States. I don't remember one single case of Germans not being frustrated at their inability to get

things moving in the academic sphere. That applied across the board. Essentially they came back malcontent and some of them devoted their lives after that to democratic reform with some success. Others simply disappeared into the German society and went about their lives. But there was a lot of discontent.

Q: Much the same thing I imagine happened in reference to the library situation too where the libraries were open and they first saw an example of an American open library. I don't know what the case is today, have you found that they more or less reverted to the old pattern?

CATHERMAN: That never took hold. That is another American reform that we worked hard on, on the open shelf system, the open library. With a few exceptions, and there were some, it did not take hold. The exceptions were essentially American financed. For instance, the John F. Kennedy Library in Berlin is more open than most. It was financed almost totally from American funding, from the Ford Foundation essentially. There are a few of those around, the American Memorial Library, again in Berlin, which was heavily financed by Americans is more open to the public. Generally they are not, generally they are pretty much on tight hold.

Q: I am glad to get your assessment of this because a substantially large number of other people that I have interviewed from the German program, who came away fairly early, left with the impression that we had had much greater success in the long run than you seem to feel that we have had. Probably your return trips to Germany refined your own thinking in that regard more than the others had an opportunity to do.

CATHERMAN: Well, I think we did a good job. We simply had a lot of very good people working. If I can just give you one example in the field of women's affairs, the Nazi woman essentially was used as a breeding mare and had no real role to play outside, sort of a toy for the men during the Nazi period. We came in with a large and determined and very talented group of people to work with German women and bring them up to having a

sense of self respect. I think we did a good job and certainly at this stage of the game the German woman is playing as much of a role in the development of her society as is the American woman—perhaps even more in the political sphere. I don't want to denigrate the effort, the effort was substantial and there were some wonderful people there.

Maybe now is the time for me to say something I hold very deeply about that generation of Americans who went to Germany with the intent of helping the Germans form a democratic society. One of the things that really amazed me, always right from the beginning, was the return of the Jew from the United States to Germany. Some of the best people we had in that period were Jews who had been forced to leave under harrowing circumstances in the "30s and who came back and sat down with the Germans and helped them democratize their society. It was a remarkable thing for me to see. A phenomenon that I have not completely resolved in my mind to this day because I know so many American Jews who would never think of doing that, who certainly did not return, and who to this day have not returned to Germany. But there was that group and they did some really good work. It is something that I hope someone will look into some day.

Q: Who was in charge of the women's program at that time?

CATHERMAN: The woman who stands out in my mind, she was the last major contributor, was Mildred Allport. She was really quite a substantial figure and played a big role in that period. But she came relatively late. She came in 1950, but she took over that job at the end of '51.

Q: She remained several years...

CATHERMAN: She remained several years and she was a big figure, but also had some good people with her.

Q: One final question before we go back to your training at Columbia, did you pick up the German language just from experience or did you also study it?

CATHERMAN: I was not a student of German, I did Russian at the university. I had about 2 1/2 months of concentrated German training in the Foreign Service Institute in Washington before the group of KROs went to Germany. So I arrived in Germany with a rudimentary speaking knowledge. But I kept working at it. Of course I was thrown into a small community in lower Bavaria, Niederbeyern, where I was the only American. My wife didn't come with me down there, so I spent over a year as the only American within 30 kilometers.

Q: That's the best teacher.

CATHERMAN: Yes, I had to speak German.

1955: After HICOG Germany, A Year Of Academic Study At Columbia University

Q: Lets go back to your academic year at Columbia.

CATHERMAN: Right. Pic Littell, my colleague from USIA, and I were the first representatives to get an academic year at government expense for the honing of our professional skills. In our case at Columbia University where we were both in Soviet studies. This was 1955 and 1956.

From the Russian Institute at Columbia University, Pic Littell went directly to Moscow and opened a USIA office in our Embassy there. It was not called USIA as the Soviets would not tolerate that. Pic had to essentially rejoin the State Department and go as a State Department officer. At any rate he opened up an operation in Moscow which was connected with USIA and soon after that began to arrange for the publication of Ameryka magazine and started some rudimentary exchanges programs with the Soviet Union.

1956: Catherman Starts Four Year Special Assignment In Vienna Monitoring East European And Soviet Media Output

I went to Vienna and spent the next four years in Vienna operating one of the more interesting things in my experience, a shop called the Special Projects Office in USIS Vienna.

Q: This was not an integral part of the regular USIS program.

CATHERMAN: It was not an integral part of the USIS program. My assignment there was to monitor the East European, what we called satellite, radio and press in those days, and also the media of the Soviet Union, and to get news items out of those media and give them to the Western press covering the Soviet empire from Vienna. In those days practically no journalists went into Eastern Europe, or if they did get in they couldn't do their job because of the Stalinist approach to the Western media. So we got information to them from the satellite and Soviet media. I also had access to Embassy reports and other information sources. I spent time briefing Western journalists, Americans and others about how we saw things developing in the satellite empire.

Q: Were you also furnishing any information to Munich radio and Radio Free Europe?

CATHERMAN: Yes. Although they had a far bigger monitoring effort than we did. We did supply a lot of information to them. We had a good working relationship with them and we got their reports back. Now they were much bigger and more complete. We were a quick moving operation. When we received a news report that looked good we got it out right away. Our advantage and our strength was that we could move fast. We were small. I think there were 15 of us in that shop.

Q: Were you the only American?

1959: Interlude—Catherman Goes To First Major USIA Exhibit In USSR For Three Months As Member Of Exhibit Staff

CATHERMAN: The only American until 1959 when Phil Arnold joined me. He became one of the PAOs in that area later on. Phil and I were colleagues for two years until 1961 when I was assigned to the Soviet Union. In 1959, I went to the Soviet Union as a member of the staff of our national exhibition there. This was the first major USIA and US Government effort to open the Soviet Union. We spent the summer there and played host to hundreds of thousands of Soviets. The Soviets also had their exhibition in the United States, in New York. That was the start of American public diplomacy in the Soviet Union. Some had been done before by Pic Littell and also Tom Tuch, Tom was my immediate predecessor in Moscow, but that was the big one. The New York Philharmonic with Leonard Bernstein came during that period. We had other large performing arts groups. We really got going in the cultural and information side of things in 1959.

Q: Had Lee Brady come to Moscow by that time?

CATHERMAN: Lee Brady was there. He was Tom Tuch's boss. The reason I mentioned Tom first was that I had a personal friendship with Tom and I always followed, or almost always followed, Tom in assignments. For instance, I replaced Tom in Moscow, later on I replaced him in Berlin, then I replaced him as Deputy Director of the Voice of America in the early "80s. And then, finally, I replaced Tom as country PAO in Germany. Lee was there and was Tom's boss. He was certainly one of the big elements in that program, although Lee himself was not a Soviet specialist. He was seconded into the Soviet program from other interests. He was a marvelous French linguist and had had years in France and returned again some time after leaving the Soviet Union. I was dedicated to Soviet Affairs. Pic Littell who had been there prior to Lee's arrival as the only USIS person was dedicated to Soviet Affairs. Lee came in after that and then left, he never returned to Soviet Affairs. He did some great things otherwise.

Q: When you went for the summer for the first American exhibit, which I gather was the one where the so-called kitchen debate took place,...

CATHERMAN: That's right.

Returns To Vienna, Then Back To USSR For Summer Of 1960

Q: Did you then leave the Soviet Union for awhile and then go back?

CATHERMAN: Yes, I went back to my job in Vienna. I still had two years to go there. I came back to Moscow in 1960 to replace both Tom Tuch and Lee Brady while they went on home leave. I spent the entire summer of 1960 there. In the meantime my operation in Vienna was beginning to change its nature. The iron curtain was beginning to open a little bit and the USIS personnel who were by that time assigned to the embassies in the satellites and the Soviet Union were able to take selected information about the American cultural experience and get it into the hands of people in the Soviet Union who were willing to take the risk of getting this kind of information. I changed that operation, which had been a cold war effort in Vienna, around and made it more of a purveyor of cultural news about the United States for peoples in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. We began to put out cultural bulletins. We began to build small exhibits. We had panel displays for show windows in front of the embassies in those countries and so on. That developed later on into a major effort. So I was happy to see that happen.

May, 1961: Kennedy-Khrushchev Meeting In Vienna Followed Immediately By Transfer To Moscow

Then two days after the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna May of 1961, Dottie and I drove from Vienna to Moscow.

Q: Oh, you were able to drive?

CATHERMAN: We were able to drive. We were one of the first ones to do it and it took three days, but we made it. I remember that period very well because I was sleeping on my desk down at the press office during the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting—for two days

—and Dottie was packing. A typical foreign service experience. She had the packers and I had all that going on. That was a very exciting meeting—the young President, John F. Kennedy and the sort of grizzled, party stalwart Nikita Khrushchev. I was assigned to Pierre Salinger, who was Kennedy's press speaker and I spent most of the time in the kitchen of the ambassador's residence or in the waiting room of the Soviet Embassy when the meetings took place there. Pierre would come out and hand me something about what was going on inside and I would take that and read it to the press. Make sure AP and UPI got it and also that it was sent down to the press center where hundreds of journalists were covering that event. So I played my little role in that. I also got some pictures of myself taken by the CIA which they later presented to me. Ernie Wiener sent them to me. He was there with me also. Ernie and I are in several of those pictures together. Ernie and I sort of had a beat of keeping track of Pierre Salinger and making sure that the information he wanted relayed from the site of the talks to the press in fact was delivered. So that was my job there.

Then I went to Moscow for three years. Those were the years of the opening. The national exhibit in 1959 had set the scene. We concluded exchanges and cultural agreements after that. By the time I got to the Soviet Union in May of 1961 we already had a traveling exhibit in the Soviet Union and I took that over for the summer, that was an exhibit on plastics, we had 30 Russian-speaking American guides and I took that exhibit over for its showing in Moscow and Tbilisi. Dottie and I were on our way to Tbilisi on a hot August day of 1961. We had stopped off for two days in Sochi which is a Black Sea resort in the Soviet Union. We tried to get a little swimming in and actually spent almost all day trying to find food; it was tough standing in line trying to get something to eat there. We came back to the hotel on that hot August day. I turned on the radio and found that the Berlin Wall was being constructed. I found this out from the Soviets and it scared the devil out of me. I did not have my own radio along. I had to rely on the hotel radio and it had a spring loaded mechanism that kept the dial focused on Radio Moscow. But with the use of brute strength I could wheel the dial down to VOA and BBC and essentially get Western reports. I was a

child of the cold war. I had been in Germany soon after the beginning of the real cold war. I ran a cold war operation in Vienna. In the Soviet Union I was alone with my wife, 1500 miles away from the nearest Americans and I was scared. I thought the red balloon would go up. I was sure we were going to war and I wondered what I would do there if in fact we did go to war. Well, what happened is that we got on a plane the next day and went on to Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia and set up this exhibit down there.

Well, I take pride in being in the Soviet Union in that opening era and I take pride in being the director of that first traveling exhibit. We had a very eventful time in Tbilisi. Those six weeks we were down there in the fall of 1961, that was the period when Khrushchev was trying to scare Kennedy and was blowing up 20 megaton hydrogen bombs in Novaya Zemlya to the north. One of the innumerable Berlin crises was in full swing and there we were down there hosting tens of thousands of Georgians and Soviet citizens on the floor of this exhibit everyday with all the attendant stress and hubbub and security and all of that that went on with those things.

Q: I want to ask a couple of questions. You got to the Soviet Union approximately a year after Gary Powers was shot down.

CATHERMAN: I was in the Soviet Union during that trial.

Q: But not when he was shot down.

CATHERMAN: I was there during the trial.

Q: I had been to the Soviet Union with the National War College group in 1960 when Tommy Thompson was still ambassador. Of course everything seemed to be going very well then. Just a few weeks after we returned to the United States, Powers was shot down and the curtain dropped even further.

CATHERMAN: Right.

Q: So I wondered what the status of the situation was when you got there in 1961. Had it loosened up again considerably after that?

CATHERMAN: Well, it loosened up for one thing because Kennedy came to power and Khrushchev, I think, felt that he could do something with Kennedy. They had their meeting in May in Vienna and it looked as though we could do some things with the Soviets for that initial period. As a matter of fact we did. We had those exchanges which I addressed. We got an academic exchanges program going. We had American students in Leningrad and Moscow and one or two outside of those principal cities. We were beginning to have exchanges of delegations. We had many major performing arts groups on both sides. So we had that starting and it was, of course, endangered in 1962 by the Cuban missile crisis. I was in Moscow during that period and it was very touchy. However, we did not miss a beat in our exchanges programs. Life became a little rough for embassy personnel because of surveillance, although from my point of view, I was able to move around as a representative of the cultural side of the house as freely as I ever did. And I did move around a lot.

Q: You were able to travel extensively within the Soviet Union?

CATHERMAN: Yes, I was able to travel extensively within the Soviet Union. I was subjected to the same regulations about closed areas, etc., and I had to get permission through the Foreign Office and all that, but I did do that and I traveled a lot. I was out in Siberia in mid 1962 with Ruth Adams, the editor of Ameryka magazine. We took, for me, a memorable trip through Siberia and down through Central Asia and into the Caucasus just prior to the eruption of the Cuban missile crisis. I think that those of us who were engaged in the cultural exchanges programs had an easier time of it in those days than did the people who were in the military and political affairs.

Q: I suppose you traveled by train as you went into the hinterland primarily didn't you?

CATHERMAN: Generally I would take a plane for the long distances. We just didn't have time to travel other ways.

Maybe I can give you a feel for the atmosphere in the embassy at that time. There were two people engaged in USIS work. We had a press operation; we had an academic exchanges program which we negotiated; we had a performing arts exchanges program, we negotiated all the contracts with the Soviets on that and also accompanied the performing arts groups. We had to take care of the American academics and students who came. They were always having their problems and we had to go and negotiate with the Soviets about that. So it was a constant 18 hour day right straight through that period. So whenever either one of us took off—and we had to travel of course, we could not just sit in an office in the embassy and handle things—we had to make the trips as compact as possible with very little time for train trips. Although I did take some train trips.

Q: Was Rocky Staples there at that time?

CATHERMAN: Rocky Staples was my boss for the first two years I was there. Yes.

Q: He told me that he traveled quite a bit in the Soviet Union by train and he felt that he was able to speak more freely to the Soviet people in the train compartments than he could most anywhere else in the Soviet Union.

CATHERMAN: Well, that is right. You can do that in planes too. Actually they were good vehicles for conversations. I never had any problems speaking with Russians, or with Soviets. Occasionally I would note how worried they were. They would look over their shoulders furtively to see who was behind them and all that. That was standard treatment in those days. Rocky was a very hard worker. I don't remember that he took any long trips.

Q: He said he took one trip, the one out to Lake Baikal and beyond on the train and he had a better experience in conversation with the Soviets that time than any other time.

CATHERMAN: I don't remember that but certainly, if he said it he did it. He was a very good boss. A very hard worker. A very tough negotiator. A positive influence on Soviet-American relations.

No I had some great experiences in those days. For instance, I accompanied Benny Goodman on his first trip to the Soviet Union in 1962. I was with the New York City Ballet for a few weeks when Balanchine brought his group back in 1962. In 1965, by that time I had left the Soviet Union, but I came back with the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell and spent six weeks touring. Those were marvelous opportunities to meet cultivated Soviets and to get out of the hot house atmosphere of the embassy.

1964: Assignment To Washington As Head Of Russian And East European Language Broadcasting At VOA

Well, at any rate, in April 1964 I was called back to the United States to take over the Voice of America broadcasts to the Soviet Union. The Soviets stopped jamming VOA in Russian and seven other languages that spring, so the decision was made to bring me back to take over that broadcasting element in the Voice of America. I spent three years running that program. I took the unit over from a former Soviet general. I was the first American in that unit. Alexander Barmine...

Q: The legendary Barmine.

CATHERMAN: The legendary Barmine who had been the youngest general in the Red Army during the civil war in the early ''20s, went on to enter Soviet diplomacy. In 1937 he was in Thessaloniki as consul general for the Soviets. He heard that his patron, Marshal Budyenni, had been arrested for treason and knew it would not be long before he would also be arrested. He went upstairs, took some money out of a safe and a gun, went down, got on the train for Paris and left his Soviet experience behind. He eventually came to the

United States and was first director of VOA Russian which opened up in 1948. He was director from 1948 until 1964 when I took it over.

Jamming Of VOA Had Stopped; Catherman Changed Personnel And Program Character

The first thing I did was to hire a dozen Russian-speaking young Americans most of whom came from families of Russian heritage; not all of them, some of them were native Americans from other ethnic origins who had learned good enough Russian to do that sort of broadcasting. We tried to change the nature of our broadcasting to take advantage of fact that we were getting in now with a good clear signal. That was a fine experience for me.

Q: Did you feel that utilization of American-born people of Russian or Eastern European ancestry gave you a different accent on the radio and did you feel that was more effective in the Soviet Union than broadcasts by emigres who might be downgraded by virtue of defecting from their home country?

CATHERMAN: Well I think so, that was a big issue. The emigres of which you speak, of course, were language purists and when we brought these Americans in, they didn't always speak the kind of Russian that the old guard would have liked. However, the cooperation was good. I think that the tone of our broadcast measurably improved. For one thing we did not have to cope with the thought that we were not getting through. We were able to develop a much lighter sort of radio style approach. We didn't have to worry about enunciating all of our words very clearly in case someone could hear through the static. We didn't have to repeat our programs four or five times a day. So the approach was very different. With these young Russian-speaking Americans came a new approach to broadcasting. They were not the sort of fully disciplined readers of script that we had had previously. They came in with their approach to life, some of them were teenagers and they found that they could speak openly in front of the microphone, they didn't need to read. So we changed the whole nature of our broadcasts.

Q: So you had a lot of ad-libbing then, I guess.

CATHERMAN: We had a lot of ad-libbing and we began to get audience mail. It was a nice period that didn't last forever. After I left the Voice, of course, jamming recommenced and stayed on until two years ago.

Q: I was going to ask you did it stay on after Khrushchev's fall or did it...

CATHERMAN: Jamming recommenced after his fall.

Q: I realized it was then, but I wondered if it started rather soon after his fall or continued on open reception for a time.

CATHERMAN: I think there was a time there of a year and a half or so, but I have really forgotten that because by that time I was off doing other things.

Q: So, you felt you really not only turned the broadcasting techniques around but that you perhaps got a much broader audience in the Soviet Union. What kind of letters did you get when you got audience response and how did they get out of the Soviet Union?

CATHERMAN: I can't tell you that, but they did. Most of the responses were to our music programs. That's always the case.

Q: Yes, Willis Conover and...

CATHERMAN: Willis was on the English broadcast, he always got lots of response. But we also had our own Russian-language jazz and popular programs. Marie Celiberti, for instance, was one of the great broadcasters in those days. She teamed up with Willis Conover and did a Russian-language version of Willis' broadcast. Most of the fan mail came in response to those music broadcasts. That was obviously an example of Soviets feeling they could get mail out if they stayed in the cultural field because the cultural field

was not considered dangerous. Also I assume the censors kept back political content stuff but let the other go through. Anyway we had a good listenership.

I had the great pleasure of going back with the Cleveland Orchestra while I was running the VOA broadcasts. While sitting in the apartment of the Baltimore Sun's correspondent at midnight one night in Moscow I heard the announcer sign off his program saying that their boss Terry was in Moscow that night and they all wanted to wish me good night and sweet dreams Terry. That was a very pleasant experience.

So I was in on the opening of the Soviet Union. I was in on two openings. I was in on the opening of the German society after World War II and I was in on the opening of the Soviet society after Stalin. Those are the two things I feel I contributed in this whole period that I spent with USIA.

1967: National War College

Then I went to the National War College, also as did you, from '67 to '68, and from there went directly to Israel as PAO. I spent two years there immediately after the Six Day War and from there went back for 3 1/2 years to Berlin; then down to Yugoslavia for 5 1/2 years; then back to Washington where I was Director of the Office of European Affairs for a year and a half. Then I was called down to the Voice of America, by Charlie Wick, as Deputy Director of VOA, replacing Tom Tuch in that job. It was a turbulent period when the Poles reimposed censorship and jamming of the Voice of America began again. From there I went to Paris as PAO for a couple of years and then spent the last five years of my career again in the Federal Republic of Germany as PAO.

Q: I presume you had some interesting experiences in each of your assignments. Lets go back to Israel now. In the wake of the war how did you find Israeli society at that time?

1968: PAO In Tel Aviv

CATHERMAN: Israeli society was, of course, very proud of what it had done. It felt that it was, I don't want to give Israeli society a broad brush treatment, but my impression as I look back on that era now is that it had pretty much established itself as impregnable, omnipotent in that part of the world. From my point of view they looked that way. They had won the war, of course there were many Israelis who were grieving at losses of their family members from the Six Day War and I always found that touching. But they felt pretty much that they were able to handle themselves very well in the Middle East. It was my job, and it was not an easy job, to go around and try to convince them in innumerable weekend visits around the country speaking in large and small groups that they would have to figure out a way of making their existence in that part of the country more palatable to the surrounding countries and societies. It was hard work. I loved my stay there and certainly it was one of the most stimulating experiences of my life dealing with the Israelis. I had some touching personal relationships with people with whom I was more at home speaking Russian than English. I learned pretty good Hebrew. I was able to do my business in Hebrew and read the newspapers before I left. There was some military tension, but not a great deal. I will say this, I made quite a contribution, I think, to the positive development of the Israeli-American Fulbright exchanges program. That was one of the high points of my contribution there.

Q: Did you study Hebrew before you went?

CATHERMAN: No, I did not. I knew nothing about that country besides reading a few reports when I arrived in Tel Aviv on a hot August afternoon in 1968. I had to start from scratch. However, I don't think I ever worked harder on a language because I felt right from the beginning that I could not simply go around that country and rely on English or Russian or German or whatever else, I had to speak the language to the best of my ability. So the weekends when I was not doing my work was spent on that language.

Q: Did you have a tutor?

CATHERMAN: I had a tutor, a very good tutor. I ended up with a 3+ speaking knowledge and a 2+ reading knowledge. The reading knowledge would allow me to get through the newspaper, but I must say I was never able really to read literature.

Q: What was the thrust of your work essentially?

CATHERMAN: In Israel?

Q: Yes, in Israel.

CATHERMAN: Well, we had an enormous amount of press work to do because of the intense relationship between the two governments. Due to innumerable visits by congressmen, senators, State Department representatives, the Secretary of State was in and out quite a bit, we had an active relationship with the Israeli and the foreign press. I did a lot of that myself. The other aspect which was important to me was the academic exchanges program. I guess I had three things: the press to handle; the academic exchanges program; and then I had the explanation of American foreign policy as regards Israel, to try to explain it to the Israelis. That was in the period of the so-called Rogers plan, Secretary Rogers. I don't remember the details of it anymore but essentially it asked that the Israelis withdraw from the West Bank, the same things we are asking these days. I had a pretty rough go.

Q: The Likud government hadn't yet come in. It wasn't quite as bad as it would have been later on.

CATHERMAN: No, but the Israelis were always very suspicious of our attempts to get them to consider withdrawing, obviously.

Q: You never had any trouble selling the American story except as far as the policy was concerned when it impinged on its particular interest.

CATHERMAN: That is right. They were very friendly and I think from a quality point of view the academic exchanges program was the best one I ever saw. We had really good people going back and forth between the two countries.

Q: I gather that you found a very high degree of education and awareness of world events, a highly intellectual society.

CATHERMAN: Very sophisticated society. A society which seemed to me at any rate to know what it wanted to do and how to do it. Of course the development of the country itself, the infrastructure and everything, was staggering for me. I was very impressed.

1970: Deputy PAO, Germany (As Director, West Berlin)

Q: So then from there you went where next?

CATHERMAN: I went to Berlin, West Berlin.

Q: And were you the so-called deputy PAO for Germany?

CATHERMAN: Yes, that's right. In those days we had no program in East Germany, but we did have RIAS, Radio In American Sector, and that was part of my portfolio. I was called the senior deputy PAO, the country PAO was located in Bonn and I was his senior deputy because of the importance then of Berlin to the effort.

Q: Who was PAO in Bonn?

CATHERMAN: Gordon Ewing, followed by McKinney Russell.

Q: What were your primary concerns in Berlin?

CATHERMAN: We had the four power talks which led to the Berlin Agreement and they took up about a year and a half of my time there. Once again I spent most of my time

engaged in briefing, or trying to convince, the Western press about our aims in those talks. I represented the American negotiator, Ambassador Kenneth Rush. It was again lots of press work. I did not have as much cultural work then as I had had when I was in Israel or previously in the Soviet Union. It was pretty much hardline political work.

After the conclusion of the Berlin Agreement we began to go to the East Germans and negotiate what eventually was the establishment of diplomatic relations with East Germany. My job was to talk with the East Germans about their treatment of the Western, specifically American, press. In other words I had to defend the First Amendment in a communist country. I would go over from West Berlin to East Berlin and talk with those people and try to get their agreement to a relatively relaxed arrangement for American newspapers to cover Eastern Germany. I didn't succeed very well, but at least the attempt was made and was made persistently. So for the last six months of my stay there I did that, not exclusively, but a preponderant part of my job was precisely that, dealing with the East Germans.Virulent Anti-Americanism Especially From Students In This Era

Q: I would think that your office in Berlin would also have a great deal to do with the things that were transpiring there at that time. What were the problems you faced there with the Green Peace people and others of that ilk?

CATHERMAN: Let me put it this way. When I arrived in Berlin in November, 1970, the Amerika House, our cultural center in downtown Berlin, did not have one window left. Every window had been shattered. This was a tremendous cultural shock for me. I had left Germany in 1955 with the feeling that we, the Americans, had helped the Germans reestablish a viable society; we integrated them into the Western community; we got them into our security apparatus; they were developing a good firm democracy. I came back in 1970, fifteen years later, to find the students on the streets on rampages against the Americans. Essentially at that period because of the Cambodian campaign. The run up had, of course, been Vietnam earlier. So I had that atmosphere in Berlin. Berlin was a specific place anyway—a special place in Germany because young men who did

not want to be drafted came to Berlin where there was no draft. There could not be a draft because it was still under occupation law—Four Power Occupation Law. So we got a lot of people up there, of course, who were against the military anyway and who certainly were against us. So we lived through many mass demonstrations. Some of them reasonably threatening, although to my knowledge, none of us ever got hurt, it looked as if we might. It was tough dealing with the Berlin students from the Free University, the university that we had been instrumental in founding and had put millions of dollars into in the late "40s. The Free University and the Technical University turned into hotbeds of student disenchantment with the United States. As a matter of fact, the Lutheran student home where Red Rudy Duschke lived in Berlin was right behind my private house in Berlin. I use to watch the students storm out of there and jump into their VWs with their red banners flying on the way to these demonstrations with some amusement. For one thing they had cars and I never thought of the workers movement in communist terms as going to demonstrations in their own cars. But, secondly, there they were right behind me, all around me, as a matter of fact. I lived right in the area where the Free University was located and I never once had an ugly, unpleasant encounter with those students on a personal basis. I had many of them when I tried to explain American foreign policy in meetings.

Q: I was going to ask you to what extent did you and others in the staff attempt to communicate with the students?

CATHERMAN: We communicated.

Q: But did you get anywhere?

CATHERMAN: We got nowhere at all. They were very emotional and reason was not the way to handle them. As a matter of fact, I don't see any way we could have handled them. I remember getting many, many turndowns. I would volunteer to come over to speak to groups and they would send notes back saying we don't deal with the CIA and things like

that. So it was a charged political atmosphere as far as the students were concerned. But the city administration, of course, was SPD, firmly pro-western, Klaus Schutz was the governing mayor, and we had very good relations with them. We had excellent relations with the cultural establishment, the administrations of the universities and so on. So it was bifurcated, really. As long as we did not get entangled in anti-American mass student demonstrations we could live a pretty comfortable and satisfying life in Berlin.

Q: This prompts a couple of questions. Was there any segment of the student population that was not taken up almost completely in this radicalization? And the other question is: I have heard it said that the students gained so much power, particularly in the Free University that they practically dictated the appointment of professors and even administration and practically ruined the value of the Free University. I would like to get your view point on both of those questions.

CATHERMAN: Frankly I don't have readily in my mind the number of students who were engaged in this political activism. It was a minority, it was not the majority by any means. Although they could turn out big demonstrations. They could turn out 30 to 50,000 with no problem at all. They were a minority. You are absolutely right, the self-administration that they perpetrated on the universities, and not only the Free University in Berlin, were dangerous. The open university simply became a gathering place for masses of young people, many of whom had indifferent academic interests but it seemed to be the place to be for many for 7 or 8 years. Some of them were very serious about their studies and others were not. They did have an enormous influence on the way German universities were governed and administered. You are right that the rectors and later on the presidents of the universities lost their power to control what was going on in the universities. They had a collegial system where the cleaning personnel had as much of a voice as did the professors in appointments in faculties. And of course the students had a big role in these appointments too. So the tendency was, obviously, to bring in professors who were radical, and who were not too exacting in their standards. Saying that, there were faculty who remained rock solid throughout all this. The physical sciences remained typically

German in their disciplined approach, and although the self-governing apparatus applied to them too they managed to keep their professorial appointments pretty much on an academic basis. The social scientists and humanities were the ones that were really rent by all this.

Q: Was there any opportunity to talk to the larger segment of the student population which was not involved in this radicalization or was that pretty much foreclosed to you?

CATHERMAN: It was not foreclosed, nothing was foreclosed, it was an open society. They were not very interested. The engineers had their own things that they wanted to do so I didn't find much enthusiasm for hearing about why Americans should be in Vietnam or Cambodia. They were really not interested in hearing from me about why we had Watergate and those things. Those were the events that were on everybody's mind, it seemed to be everybody's mind.

Q: From the standpoint of other than physical destruction, what did this mean to the America House and its attendance?

CATHERMAN: Well, actually we had reasonably good attendance during those days. More for cultural events than the political events. The popularity of the Americans as purveyors of political information in Germany had already waned considerably. We were not looked upon as a creditable political source. But the culture still went on unabated, and it still does today. The American cultural offerings in Germany are as popular now as they were in the early ''50s.

Q: I will get to this a little later when you get to your last tour over there, but do you think that this loss of credibility, as far as America being a source of political sophistication and interest, has remained in Germany? Have we pretty well lost it permanently?

CATHERMAN: That is the big question. I don't really feel that I can give a creditable answer to that. My feeling is that we lost a lot because of Vietnam. We lost a lot because

of Watergate. Before those two phenomena, the United States was considered more or less the paragon in West Germany. Of course, there had been American brutality in World War II and we carpet bombed cities (and the argument was raised whether that was necessary or not) but essentially we were the paragon. We came in there with our democratic ideas. After the de-nazification period people were free to go where they pleased. The economy flourished, etc. And then along came those events. They were followed by the great debates about missiles. The answer to the SS-20s and the debate about the emplacement of the Pershings on German soil and cruise missiles with atomic warheads, etc. That brought out all of these young people who had been nurtured on the anti-Americanism of Vietnam and Watergate onto the streets with the question of why was America doing this to us. We want to be left out of this, we have other things we want to do. Those were the three big phenomena that tipped a lot of Germans thinking about the United States away from that euphoria that we had in the immediate post-war World War II era; during the high point of the cold war when we were the defender of liberty and all of that and rescued Berlin from Stalin.

Q: Which probably accounts for the opinion recently that some 75-80% of the Germans disapprove of the US action in the Gulf.

CATHERMAN: Well, yes. But of course a lot of it stems from our immediate post-war approach to the Germans. They lost a war and shouldn't be running around the world creating all that trouble. There is a lot to be said there. I want to qualify what I said about German attitudes about the United States. Invariably when Germans come into physical contact with American society they have a positive impression. They get a very positive impression. That applies today as well as previously. If a German comes to this country as a tourist or as a participant in one of our exchanges programs he comes back to Germany with a positive impression. It practically never fails, although it has in a couple of instances. It failed with Oskar La Fontaine; that didn't work with him, although he certainly is not an enemy of the United States. He is sort of sour about what he saw here. But in most cases

that is not true. So I cannot as an individual give you a direct answer to your question. It is the dilemma as far as German attitudes about Americans are concerned.

May, 1974: Country Public Affairs Officer, Yugoslavia

Q: Lets go on to...Where did you go from Berlin?

CATHERMAN: While I was in Berlin I was assigned as PAO to Yugoslavia and Dottie and I had the great privilege of studying Serbo-Croatian in Berlin. The Minister in Berlin, Dave Klein, found an apartment for us to use for the four months that we studied Serbo-Croatian and we had a very good course at Berlitz in Berlin. In May, 1974 we went to Yugoslavia able to conduct our affairs in Serbo-Croatian and it was really a nice experience.

Q: Who was your immediate predecessor there?

CATHERMAN: Pic Littell. Pic Littell was another guy I followed around.

We spent 5 1/2 years there. The Yugoslav experience was different than any other one I had in that we were in a society overwhelmingly pro-American and overwhelmingly open to people who were interested in the arts and intellectual activities. Dottie's an artist and I was interested in the performing arts as well as the creative arts. Within the matter of a few weeks we established life-long friendships with the best writers, the artists, the poets and some of the journalists. It was not as interesting for me to be with the journalists who were under a great deal of pressure, as it was with the creative arts, the performing artists. It was a very positive experience.

Q: What were the essential parts of your program while you were there?

CATHERMAN: We had five branch offices in Yugoslavia. Our Embassy was located in Belgrade, but we also had information and cultural centers, and Americans running them, in the five provincial capitals. So we ran a full-blown USIS program across the board. There was a quite large academic exchanges program. We had full access to the media,

so we had an information program. Although the government didn't by any means agree with what we said, we had access to the press. We had unparalleled personal contact opportunities and I think that was my big contribution. I simply went with the writers and the creative intellectuals of that country for 5 1/2 years and that was the big thing I did.

Q: Did you notice any intensity in the ethnic differences within the country which has now flared into unfortunately civil war proportions?

CATHERMAN: They were always there. I didn't notice that it was intensified with the single exception of the Kosovo. The Albanians in the Kosovo area were becoming a bigger problem and there were disturbances down there toward the end of my tour. In 1979 there were some killings down there. The Yugoslav army moved in. Things were degrading there, no doubt about it. As far as Croatia and Slovenia were concerned the relations were not good but I did not feel they were degrading while I was there.

Q: You didn't have the intense blow-ups that are now taking place?

CATHERMAN: No, because Tito was still alive. You know the old story about Yugoslavia being a country of five nationalities, four languages, three religions, two alphabets, and one Yugoslav. And that was Tito.

Q: How was the Catholic Church treated in Yugoslavia? Was it pretty free to operate?

CATHERMAN: Croatia was Roman Catholic.

Q: Yeah, I know they were Roman Catholic, but there was a lot of Muslim influence in the country, too.

CATHERMAN: The Muslim influence was essentially in the Kosovo area and in Bosnia—its capital is Sarajevo. Yeah, you had Muslims down there. Actually Muslims were able to practice their religion throughout the country. The Roman Catholic Church was most active in the north—Slovenia and Croatia. It was tolerated in Serbia, but the Serbian Orthodox

Church was essentially the church of choice among the Christians in Serbia. And that applied also to Montenegro and Macedonia.

Q: It is not necessarily connected with your professional experience, but what do you guess is going to happen now? Is the country going to fly apart?

Will Yugoslavia Fly Apart?

CATHERMAN: I think it will, yeah. The Serbs will try to pull the Slovenians back and will probably succeed applying a lot of force. The Yugoslav army is officered essentially by Serbs and there is going to be some violence. I'm not clairvoyant, I don't know how this will spin out. The Slovenians obviously want to become part of Western Europe. They want to get away from the albatross around their neck, the rest of Yugoslavia, since they contribute their lion share of the economic sustenance for Yugoslavia as such. So I think it is going to be very difficult.

Q: The Croatians, of course, are always at swords point with the Serbs.

CATHERMAN: Right.

Q: Your are right, I am afraid that country is going to fly apart.

CATHERMAN: Yeah. We have one major difference now and that is the cold war is over and the Soviet threat is not as powerful as it used to be. So if it does fly apart, from our point of view, it probably would not mean the end of the world. It would have been extremely dangerous for us, the Americans, back in the "60s and "70s when I was there and the Soviets were still considered the enemy.

Q: One final question before we leave Yugoslavia. At the time that I was at the War College we visited Yugoslavia as well as the Soviet Union. At that time I found that the army was probably the most vocal in their condemnation of, and contempt for the Soviet government. Was that universally true, did you find any of that when you were there?

Much more so than the civilian population who tended to keep their feelings more quiet in that respect.

CATHERMAN: That is a tough question. The Yugoslavs, including the army, were very careful while I was there not to irritate the Soviets overly. As long as the Soviets in Yugoslavia behaved, the Yugoslavs would rather have tolerated them and not create or allow tension to develop. I didn't have all that much experience with the army, but I did meet a lot of officers. Certainly from the civilian component the attempt was not to play up the tensions between the Soviets and the Yugoslavs. The tensions were certainly there, but we tended to hear of them from intelligence sources rather than from on-the-street conversations. Of course, we knew what the Soviets were trying to do. They were certainly, I would say, brutal in their treatment of the Yugoslavs. They were doing what they could to subvert the economy and the society and I think in some respects they were somewhat successful.

Q: I suppose the reason why the military were as outspoken as they were was because we were the War College group and they didn't necessarily distinguish between those of us who were officers in the military and those of us who were civilians. They thought they were dealing with essentially an American military oriented group, and I suppose that was the reason they were more vocal.

CATHERMAN: You were there in an earlier and much tougher time, during the cold war.

Q: This was in 1960 when I was there.

CATHERMAN: Right, exactly. That was a tough period. It was a period when the Yugoslavs had not firmly established that they had pulled away from the Soviet Union. They were still working on it. By the mid "70s, when I went there, that was pretty well established. Not that the Soviets were not trying to subvert the Yugoslavs, but they did not pose the massive threat that they had posed when you were there in 1960.

1981: Washington; Area Director For Europe

Q: From Yugoslavia you went...

CATHERMAN: I came back to Washington. I was area director for Europe. By that time Charlie Wick was Director of USIA.

Q: By that time Europe had recombined—the Eastern European and Western separation had terminated.

CATHERMAN: Yes, I think I had 31 countries.

I remember in an anecdotal way taking Mr. Wick on his first trip abroad as Director of USIA to Europe. That was an intensive experience.

1983: Poland Begins Jamming VOA Again; Catherman Transfers To VOA As Deputy Director

Toward the end of that first year and a half in Washington, the Poles began their clamp down. USIA responded, as did the US Government, of course, with approbation, and the Poles began jamming the Voice and I was sent down to the Voice of America as Deputy Director in a period when the Voice was once again beginning to occupy center stage because in that crisis people were looking to the Voice as a source of information, and as a source of broadcasting official commentaries on world affairs. So it was exciting.

The Voice is always in a turmoil. It is right now. We are in another crisis here.

Q: Yes, a little later I would like to get your thoughts on the most recent attempt on the part of the Agency to pull the Voice's personnel and their budgeting back into the central office.

CATHERMAN: Yes, I was, of course, in the Voice of America when Mr. Wick gave VOA autonomy over the conduct of its personnel and administrative offices. And now I am back

at the Voice, working as a retiree, when the opposite move is being made. So I have seen it go both ways. If I may comment right now on that, I think Mr. Wick was very wise to do what he did because he won the loyalty of the directors of VOA in giving VOA some autonomy in conducting its personnel affairs. USIA had never done a very good job of administering VOA. For one thing USIA has other interests and VOA has only one and that is broadcasting. So, USIA tended to apply different criteria in its hiring policies than VOA wanted to apply. VOA needed broadcasters. USIA needed foreign service officers, writers, a variety of people, cultural affairs specialists, etc. and did not concentrate adequately on getting broadcasters for VOA. So I think that was a very wise move on Mr. Wick's part. In return he had very good relations with the directors of VOA. In a way I thought they felt they were beholden to him for that move. Another thing that Mr. Wick did in that period when I was here was commence an enormous rebuilding of the VOA broadcasting infrastructure. There was a time when people were talking in terms of putting upwards of a billion dollars alone in VOA construction. That has since eroded.

Q: It was pretty much brought up sharp about four or five years ago.

Right Wing Ideologues Brought Into Voice Cause Dissension

CATHERMAN: But those were heady days down here. They were ideologically fraught. I came down here at the same time that some very extremely right wing ideologues also arrived in the Voice of America. The editorials they tried to write I thought were so full of anti-Soviet invective that they did not properly represent official American attitude towards the Soviet Union, nor were they proper content for VOA broadcasts. I had quite a struggle on that one. As a matter of fact, I think eventually I was eased out of the Voice because of my obstreperousness in protecting the VOA news service from that kind of influence and in trying to temper the political content.

Q: What was your observation of the feeling of the rank and file of the VOA personnel at that time? Were they also disturbed by this heavy orientation towards the extreme right wing.?

CATHERMAN: Well, they were outraged. That is an element of VOA was outraged. Another element of VOA was outraged that we were not harder. That is endemic to VOA. VOA has elements that will be outraged at whatever happens. It is a huge amorphous group of people. There are all kinds of elements down here as there must be because we are an international broadcaster. We have all these language services and we also have a determined core of American journalists who consider themselves journalists and are going to defend the First Amendment, as any right thinking journalist would do. All kinds of people down here encompassing the political spectrum.

Q: Do you still have bad feeling between the English language broadcasts and the other language services?

CATHERMAN: Sure.

Q: Still as tough as it ever was?

CATHERMAN: I think that that sort of back biting here in the Voice has subsided somewhat, but it has not disappeared. It is not as rampant as it seemed to me it was when I was here 10 years ago. I think part of that is the soft touch of the administration of the Voice right now. The people who are running the Voice are very attuned to the various tensions here and pay attention to them, and don't fan the flames. Which has been done in the past.

Q: I headed, at the request of then Director Jim Keogh, a study group that came down here in '74 and it was rampant at that time. The battle of the English language

broadcasting which felt it was riding high was the principal element of the Voice and the opposition, the language services which was terribly intense at that time.

CATHERMAN: This came to the fore again, of course, just recently when Mr. Gelb came over here and insisted on appearing before the employees of VOA together with Mr. Carlson. In the process it seemed to me at any rate, some sores in VOA were reopened. It is not merely that VOA has an intense relationship with the mother agency, but it also has all of these things going on within VOA. All of those lesions were opened again. So the tension is bigger than it was, let's say four or five weeks ago. But it still is not as big as it was in those days when the Poles were jamming and a new administration was trying to figure out what to do with the VOA and there were all those political uncertainties. We do not have those political uncertainties here in the Voice right now. We know where we stand and we know how to deal with it.

1985: Return To Germany As PAO/Director Of USIS

Q: Lets go on. What were your observations during your last tour? How do you think the German-American relationship had progressed by that time and where were we from your stand point as USIS head at that time?

CATHERMAN: When I came back to Germany in 1985, I had two years in France before coming to Germany. I was in Paris from '83-'85. That was quite an experience too. I arrived in Germany at the time the debate about short range nuclear weapons was at its height. It was an anti-American debate. One can characterize it differently, but I don't. I characterize it as a debate against the placement of American Pershing II and cruise missiles on German soil. They just didn't want us. We could go through the whole business that the Soviets had SS-20s capable of destroying Germany and all of that, but it made no dent on these young people who did not want on West German soil atomic weaponry capable of striking the Soviet Union. That was the atmosphere I encountered when I came back to Germany for my final tour. The Ambassador was Rick Burt, a young, I think

about 40 at that time, intellectual, a strategic arms expert who had things that he wanted to tell the Germans. He had been a New York Times correspondent and knew exactly what the media were doing. He wanted in on that. So I found that USIS on the press side, the information side, was sucked completely into this debate. Our job was to support the Ambassador, to write his speeches, to get the widest possible coverage of those speeches, to get him into the right fora, and to keep moving on the short range nuclear weaponry—to keep it going. We worked very hard on it. I was in on it. I had to learn a hell of a lot, some of which I had either forgotten or never known, about that form of weaponry. I had to encounter tens of thousands of mostly young people around the country who were dead set against that.

However, at the same time we had several other things going which functioned reasonably well. The heyday of the Amerika Haus was past. It was past 20 years previously. We still, however, did have those installations and they were still open, lending books, having conferences and seminars and American speakers talking about subjects, including nuclear missilery and so on. So there was a program going to which the Germans paid attention. I never had an unpleasant personal encounter of my own during those five years I spent in the concluding time of my career with the Germans.

Q: What was the audience for the programs of this nature that were carried out by the Amerika Ha#ser?

CATHERMAN: They tried to get young people, but youth didn't really have much time for it. It was professional people, mature people, although I don't want to sell the attempts to get young people engaged short. Because there were young people there. I think it was a pretty good mix. It was not big, but there were people who were willing to talk with Americans, and in that respect I noticed a difference from that period of my intense combat in Berlin. I had no problem ever talking with people. I remember one memorable evening when Rick Burt invited the entire Green representation from the Bundestag to his house for dinner. Lo and behold they came. I don't think anybody turned that invitation down. We

had a great evening with those people. Although I don't want to sell the fervor of that anti-short range nuclear weaponry debate short, we were able to do business. We had a fine leaders program, the international visitors program, the biggest in the world. We had a wonderful academic exchanges program; I think that was the best work I did, with those academics. Charlie Wick came along and installed a television station at RIAS in Berlin and I worked on that tirelessly, still am working on it.

The Interest In And Devotion To USA-German Relations Has Waned Among USIA Officers Today

So I think USIS functioned as well as it could given a couple of factors. The people who work for USIS today are not the same type of people who were working for USIS in the 1950s. You don't have those really prominent scholars, people engaged in the women's movement, who came into the USIS foreign service. Why should they? We don't have that kind of mission anymore. So, we are dealing with a foreign service officer who spent some time in Germany, but he or she also spends a lot of time in the Third World or other countries, and who does not have that intense loyalty to the German-American relationship, let's say that I do. I spent a total of 12 years in that country.

With the result that as the fruits of my initial work with the Germans began to ripen, as the German nation unified, I felt in many respects that my work had borne some fruit. That we had in the Germans a democratic society, we were working on that. We now have a unified Germany which was one of our goals. A unified, democratic Germany, a prosperous Germany. I can look back to a speech that Jimmy Byrnes delivered in September 1946, four years before I came to Germany but which set, even in those early days after World War II, the tone for American attitudes towards Germany. He concluded that speech by saying the American people want a prosperous, unified, democratic people and we will help you achieve that. In December 1989, Jim Baker in Berlin said that he was proud to be a representative of the Americans who had stood by the Germans as they

democratized and united. I can only echo both of those statements and they more or less encompass my life in the USIA foreign service.

Catherman's Expectations Re German Attitudes Toward US As Result Of German Unification

Q: This may not be a fair question, but what do you think the unification of Germany is going to do to that feeling, inasmuch as the East Germans now are having their own difficulties with the West Germans and vice versa, coming from a completely different 40 years of political and economic background? They have very little, I would guess, feeling of what the Americans did to democratize the country after World War II. Do you think it is going to dilute whatever feeling is left among the Germans of favoritism towards the US?

CATHERMAN: I would like to deflect that question, if I could. I don't think, for me at any rate, that that is a germane question. The way I look at the Germans is that those differences between East and West will be taken care of very quickly with generous application of what the German characterize—discipline, working together. The East German attitudes towards the United States that I was able to observe before I returned home were not at all negative.

Q: I wouldn't think so much negative as perhaps just apathetic.

CATHERMAN: Or uninformed. But we are going to make up for that. Chancellor Kohl wants to emphasize East Germany in our exchanges program. He is very concerned that East Germans have a good picture of the United States as quickly as they can get it. And I think we will cooperate with him in doing that. He put some German money on the line to take care of that. I don't look upon that as a big problem. What I see, however, is a burgeoning democratic power, Germany, sitting in the middle of Europe. I would be foolish not to say that we are going to have enough problems with that democratic Germany as it evolves and takes its place as the most powerful country in Europe, and I mean Europe East and West. I guess the final proof will be how Germans and Americans interrelate as

the Germans look upon us completely as equals. We will see whether these decades that we stayed with the Germans pay off for us. I am an optimist about that. I think we will get along with them reasonably well, but there is not going to be any free lunch. By no means.

Q: Do you think that as the younger people age and assume the positions of leadership in the country, their radical youth is going to be mitigated somewhat and we may not see the built in antipathy that existed for a time with the youth as they were growing up, or do you anticipate any difficulty in reference to our German relationships as a result of that?

CATHERMAN: No I don't see any great difficulty although if we keep getting into wars that the young Germans don't like, they are certainly going to go to the street, and they are in the streets right now and they will be tomorrow which is a big demonstration day, the 26th of January—a big day of anti-war and anti-American demonstrations in Germany. But the relationship between the two governments is not too adversely affected by those demonstrations. The relationship between the two governments will be put under stress as the Germans reassume what they feel is their rightful posture in Eastern Europe and as they intensify their relationship with the Soviet Union at a time when, perhaps, we can not for a variety of reasons. Ideological as well as economic.

Q: Unless the current attitude of the Soviet Government mitigates even friendship with Germany.

Q: Yes, but those are temporary things. The Germans, as far as I am concerned, are on a roll as far as East Europe and the Soviet Union are concerned. They are going in that direction. That is where their energy will be absorbed. It will be absorbed in that part of the world and not in the Persian Gulf. That is a fact of life I think.

Q: Before we quit we did skip France and that is my fault. You said that was an interesting experience. What was particularly significant for you during your two years in Paris?

1983: USIS Director (PAO) In France; Catherman Finds The French Unexpectedly Pro-American

CATHERMAN: Well, I was surprised at the pro-Americanism that I found among the French. I had been led to believe that the French were cynical about the Americans.

Q: I think they were.

CATHERMAN: And I came there ill prepared. Next to Israel France was the country I was least prepared to cope with on arrival. I was sent to Paris because the deputy to Charlie Wick, Gil Robinson, wanted me out of the Voice. I was creating trouble for him down here.

Q: He was soon out of the Agency.

CATHERMAN: He was soon out of the Agency but he wasn't out of the Agency then. He wanted to get me out of there but he knew he had to handle it in a way that I would not create great trouble. He gave me a major PAO-ship, which I had trouble refusing and I went, but I was not prepared. I spent several months learning French, but by that time my hearing was going and I really had some problems with the language, although I had a conversational ability and I used French. I was not prepared for the enthusiastic reception on the part of the French and that started from the day I arrived and was still going on when I left France to go to Bonn.

I never felt as confident in my French as I did in Russian, Serbo-Croatian or German so that tempered the way I went about handling my affairs there. But the response from the French to me and to Americans was overwhelmingly positive. It was an overwhelmingly positive era in French-American relations. I arrived just in time for some celebrations of the 200 anniversary of the conclusion of our Revolutionary War. The town was full of Americans in colonial clothing and the French loved that sort of pageantry. We had some wonderful ceremonies and dinners at Versailles. They went on all night. I was overwhelmed with all of this. I had a good time with the French and I think, again, my best

contribution was in bringing some better order into the academic exchanges program. Continuing the very fruitful university relationships that were in effect all over the country. And dealing with political affairs, mostly again centering around nuclear weaponry. But I will admit, that from my professional point of view, those two years in France were the least satisfying because I had never dealt with a romance language. My languages had been Germanic with the exception of Hebrew or Slavic. It just took too much of my time trying to cope with the language. That is a lesson I hope USIA has learned, not to send senior officers who are not qualified in a language to major posts. It happened with me and it caused a great deal of stress for me, more than I want to talk about.

Q: As you undoubtedly know there was a lot of feeling over many years that the Western European program had been inbred and that officers had tended to make a career out of it and resisted being anywhere else except Western Europe. No where was this more evident than the case of the French program. I think some of it was justified. The people who were in USIS almost invariably tended to look down upon anyone who came out there to participate in the USIS program if they were not Francophiles and if they were not French language specialists. An attempt was made to clear out that kind of ingrained French immersion. By the time you got there had that been fairly well adjusted or was there still a good deal of that attitude on the part of the American staff?

CATHERMAN: I don't remember that there was any of that. Most of the Americans, if not all of them, had come from African posts where they had learned that version of French and with one or two exceptions they were all having their own little problems. They were better off in the language than I was, but they were by no means perfect. There were one or two people who spoke perfect, bilingual French. But out of 20 Americans their linguistic abilities were not top class, although they did a good job, we had a good staff.

Q: Well, I think that was a result of a concentrated effort to move people out of the French program and bring in people with other viewpoints and experiences.

The Need For Excellent Public Diplomacy Programs In Europe

CATHERMAN: That is important too. You raise, in certain aspects, an ideological question. It might not be a bad time to address this. This sort of back biting that goes on in USIA, even more so than in the State Department, about assignments to Western Europe or to Europe as a whole versus all those posts in the Third World or other continents. My approach is something like this. We obviously have to serve all posts and that involves also not working in Western Europe. There is a danger, however, that USIA feels that it cannot measure up to mounting full-blown information and cultural efforts in Western Europe. There is a danger that USIA officers will go for the quick fix that they can get in a Third World country where their success is assured. I rebel against that. I think it is every bit as important that the United States Government have fruitful, cultural and information relationships with the West Europeans as it is with Africans, or any other representatives of the Third World. It requires a different type of approach. You obviously are not going to go into Western Europe with an assured success. On the other hand, the chances that you will get killed probably are less. But we should not neglect, let's say, the Germans because we are dealing with a democratic society. We should not neglect the Germans. The Germans are going to pose great problems for the Americans in the future. If we can keep Germans coming our way, paying attention to what we Americans are thinking and doing, we are going to be able to deal with the Germans much better than if we decide that since they are now democratized and united we do not have to deal with them. We must deal with them. We must keep showing them what we have on our minds and what we are doing. We must keep using the resources that have been successful with the Germans in the past, in the future. And that applies to the other West Europeans also. We cannot take them for granted.

Q: I think you are entirely right. Congress has a lot to do with this too. When I was still active in trying to justify our programs and resources on the Hill, a majority of Congress had come to the conclusion that we had done our job in Western Europe. They are all

our friends now so why are we wasting money on the European programs, lets get it on elsewhere. There was, I think, particularly in the Kennedy years, a feeling on the part of some people in USIA, Tom Sorensen and one of two others, who felt that Europe ought to be decimated and haul all those stuffed shirts out of there and put them in other countries where it was perhaps more difficult and see whether they could work in an environment which was different from Western Europe. Therefore about the time I was getting ready to leave the Agency, there was a wholesale cutting back in the European program. I think a lot of that was the feeling that had come over from the Sorensen days and that resulted in a lot of changes in the personnel in Western Europe.I couldn't agree with you more and I don't know what Congress feels now. I haven't had any contact with them. What do you think?

CATHERMAN: Well, they are going to feel that we should be doing something with the Germans pretty quickly.

Q: I'm sure they will. Maybe they won't think the same way about France and Spain, etc. but I am sure they will about the Germans.

Before we conclude do you have any other general comments you would like to make, any reminisces or observations on your career that you would like to express? Where do you think the USIA is going in light of the current argument that exists to the effect that we should be broken up and assigned to different jurisdictions of the US Government?

Final Observations About Role And Value Of Public Diplomacy And Of USIA As An Entity

CATHERMAN: I think the function of public diplomacy (maybe we could use better terminology, but public diplomacy is what we are using right now) is very important and is fast becoming the most important function of diplomacy. When I think of the changes that have taken place in the ambassadors' approach to the media since I have been in this business it is astonishing. I probably spent as much time with Ambassador Walters in Germany over that last year of my career as did anybody in the Embassy. Essentially

working with him to put in a public affairs context what he wanted to say to Germans above and beyond what he said to the Chancellor or the Foreign Minister. The same thing applied even more so with Rick Burt who is a media person. He spent the majority of his time dealing with the media. So the function has become increasingly important. I am not a big fan of USIA as an entity. I can see VOA as an entity. I am not totally convinced that having a separate arm of American diplomacy for the public aspect separate from the rest of diplomacy is the way to go at it. On the other hand, I don't believe that so firmly that I am going to do battle about it. I just have my doubts that USIA is very important whereas the function is crucial. We cannot exist in the diplomatic life of the United States without dealing with the media in a big way any more. We can not do that. That involves the Ambassador and everyone else in the Embassy who is dealing with the public, and that is practically everybody. So the function is very important. My impression about USIA is that it doesn't play a very big role in that. The organization does not, people in it do. The people in it are vital. But I don't see the organization playing a big role. The result is we get a succession of discontented directors to come in with a lot of energy and end up thoroughly frustrated and frankly tend to create problems for the professionals who have to conduct this public diplomacy. So I am not thoroughly convinced of that. But I am thoroughly convinced that public diplomacy is as important, if not more important, than anything else that embassies do or this government does.

Q: Just one comment. The trouble is that if we found Presidents more concerned with putting people in as head of USIA who know and will do something about public diplomacy or something more about media treatment we probably wouldn't have the difficulties we have had. I think that is largely the problem. I think you are right also that somehow or other USIA doesn't quite have the standing it ought to have. Whether a return to the State Department is the answer, I don't know. I grew up in the program in the days when being in the State Department was suffocating. You often just simply couldn't do anything and the ambassadors abroad wouldn't let you do anything. I know it has all changed now.

Thank you very much for your observations and your time, Terry. I appreciate your taking this morning to put yourself on tape.

CATHERMAN: Thank you.

End of interview